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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Identical letters dated 2 April 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, dated 29 March 2013, regarding the twenty-third round of the Geneva international discussions (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly under agenda item 34, entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development", and of the Security Council in accordance with rule 6 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council.

(*Signed*) Vakhtang **Makharoblishvili**
Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Georgia to the United Nations

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Annex to the identical letters dated 2 April 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia regarding the twenty-third round of the Geneva international discussions

The twenty-third round of the Geneva international discussions was held on 27 March 2013. The participants in the discussions took part, in an individual capacity, in the two working groups: Working Group I, which focused on security and stability in Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, and Working Group II, which focused on the issues related to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees to the places of their original residence. The discussions were co-chaired by representatives of the United Nations, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and attended by the participants from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. The Head of the Provisional Administration of the former South Ossetian Autonomous District and the representatives of the Sokhumi and Tskhinvali proxy regimes also took part in the twenty-third round of the discussions.

The head of the Georgian team reiterated the commitment of the new negotiating team to the Geneva international discussions as the key format for the implementation of the ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008.

On 26 March, an information session was held on the role of women in conflict resolution. The invited experts provided the participants with information about the international political and legal framework for ensuring women's full, equal and effective participation at all stages of peace processes and contributing to strengthening their role in peace and security.

In the framework of Working Group I, the participants addressed one of the central items of the agenda: the non-use of force. The group of experts that had been established at the twenty-first round asked the co-Chairs about the reasoning behind the consolidated text of the draft statement of the participants in the Geneva international discussions on the non-use of force, which had been revised by the co-Chairs to accommodate the differing views expressed during previous drafting sessions. The experts agreed to exchange views and opinions regarding the text without engaging in drafting at that stage. The discussions showed that the divergences with regard to principled positions remained unchanged. The participants agreed to engage in the drafting of the document circulated by the co-Chairs at the next round.

The Georgian participants stressed once again that the statement could only be issued after the Russian side had reciprocated Georgia's unilateral, legally binding pledge on the non-use of force, which had been made in 2010 and had recently been reiterated and supported by the Parliament of Georgia. Georgia once again called upon the Russian Federation to fulfil its outstanding obligation.

In Working Group I, the participants also discussed the security situation on the ground. Georgia raised concerns about the recent intensification of the so-called

"borderization" process along the occupation line in the Tskhinvali region, which was affecting the villages of Tamarasheni-Dvani, Atotsi, Didi Khurvaleti and Gugutiantkari. The Georgian side emphasized the necessity of ensuring that the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia had access to both regions so that it could fully implement its mandate in Georgia. Georgia also raised concerns about the continued obstruction of the Gali Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism, and stressed the importance of its resumption in its full composition and without preconditions. In Working Group I, the participants from Georgia once again stressed the need to create valid and functional international security arrangements.

In Working Group II, the Georgian participants underlined the need to address the concrete concerns of the conflict-affected population and provide practical solutions to tangible humanitarian and human rights issues. Georgia expressed particular concern about the imposition of severe restrictions on the freedom of movement, which affects the everyday life of people residing within and in the vicinity of the occupied regions, in particular with regard to their right to education, access to health care and other social and economic rights. The participants from Georgia stressed the responsibility that the Russian Federation bears for violations of these fundamental human rights. The Georgian side expressed its readiness to actively engage in substantive dialogue on specific aspects from the catalogue on best practices and freedom of movement presented by the co-Chairs at the twenty-second round. As a first step towards providing for the progressive realization of the freedom of movement in a non-political manner, on the basis of the principles of transparency and predictability, Georgia confirmed its support for the principles and modalities presented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for facilitating interaction between the divided communities by organizing humanitarian visits.

The twenty-fourth round of the Geneva international discussions will be held on 25 and 26 June 2013.